

## **What are you Spraying along the County Roads?**

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County Engineers receive any number of calls about roadside weed treatments. There are a lot of reasons that we spray weeds along county roads. They range from cost to effectiveness of noxious weed control. But that's another story.

People are often concerned about what is being sprayed in front of their property. And they question the type and use of chemical products. On the other hand, some people are concerned about "noxious weeds". Those are plants that are non-native, can be very invasive and cause great problems for the folks who grow your food. The calls represent that variety of viewpoints.

- "I don't want you putting that nasty spray stuff along my property. What do I have to do to make you stop?"
- "Why haven't you taken care of those weeds along my property? They look awful and I think some of them are noxious weeds!"

These calls are best forwarded to the county "weed spray" person. This employee holds a special Operator Certification, a WSDA Pesticide License, which includes ongoing CEU requirements to assure they know what they are using and the associated concerns. They are required by the Washington State Department of Agriculture to be tested several times per year to monitor the levels of chemicals in their system. If the levels get too high that person must be rechecked and cleared in order to continue with the program. This alerts us to their health and well-being, and highlights the reasons for your concerns as well.

Due to the sensitivity of chemical spraying, each call is usually handled on a case-by-case basis. The weed spray person will go out to the property to decide what problems or special conditions exist. As a rule, we usually spray from the road to the outside of ROW. The chemicals most often used include:

- **Roundup** (contact killer)
- **Vengeance** (broad leaf killer)
- **Landmark** (sterilant) not used in areas with potential water runoff.
- **Burner** is used primarily in the spring. Not used as a long term weed killer.

Environmental conditions must be considered each time we spray. We also document what, where, when, and how a chemical is applied. Some use state of the art GPS, while other relies on daily diaries. But all track the chemical application, locations, and check temperatures and wind speeds.

Most property owners in Douglas County who request "Owner Weed Control" are organic wheat farmers and orchardists. They work hard at being good stewards of their land and the county right-of-way.

Many counties have Weed Boards for noxious weed control enforcement. Some farm and orchard driven counties feel that property owners are better stewards of the weed issue than the government, and the cost of one more agency is not necessary to the overall success of the

program. Wheat farmers and orchardists are typically good role models by being good stewards of their own weed control.

If a county resident doesn't want chemicals sprayed in front of their property, counties commonly use a formal process, under a Resolution or Ordinance, to meet their request. That process has rules for the private land owner and county to follow, with an Agreement for Private Control of Vegetation on County Right-Of-Way.

We will then post their property to be maintained as "Owner Weed Control" with signs at the beginning and ending of the described area(s). These areas are then considered a "No Spray Zone". The agreement requires the property owner to maintain the weeds within the no spray zone at no cost to the county. Otherwise the county can come in and take care of the weeds with the spray program.

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Questions about this article, or any of the series, or on other topics related to County Roads, may be directed either to your County Engineer, or to Al King, P.E., County Road Administration Board, Olympia, at [Al@CRAB.Wa.Gov](mailto:Al@CRAB.Wa.Gov).

**Note to the publisher.** Douglas County photos may be obtained from CRAB that portray the equipment used for weed spray application.